

**Name: Eugene Kridler**  
**Date of Interview: January 27, 2006**  
**Location of Interview: Sequim, Washington**  
**Interviewer: Jerry C. Grover**

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**Approximate years worked for Fish and Wildlife Service:** Worked for CCC for 2 years, 1 year with Park Service, 6 years with military, and 29 years with Fish and Wildlife Service.

few stories of his experiences with the Fish and Wildlife Service and says that he had an enjoyable career with them, and feels that it can be a rewarding career for young people.

**Offices and Field Stations Worked, Positions Held:** For the Park Service: worked as a temporary ranger/naturalist at Lava Beds, CA. Fish and Wildlife Service: Bowdoin NWR as a GS-3 Clerk, in 1952 went to Salton Sea NWR as GS-5 Assistant Manager, then was the 1<sup>st</sup> Refuge Manager at McNary as a GS-7, went to Tule Lake as refuge biologist as a GS-7, Sacramento Complex (Colusa, Sutter) for 4 years as refuge biologist as a GS-9, went to Malheur in 1960 as GS-11 biologist, worked at Midway, went to Hawaii as the service biologist GS-11 and was also the endangered species coordinator as GS-12 and eventually got his GS-3 as endangered species coordinator.

**Most Important Projects:** Forest Bird Survey of Hawaii, tagged monk seals and sea turtles, worked on goony birds - Laysan and Black-footed Albatross - on Midway, acquired James Campbell Refuge and Pearl Harbor areas, and endangered species and brought 10 other areas into the NWR System.

**Colleagues and Mentors:** Colleagues include: Ed O'Neill, Lynn Greenwalt, John Sincock, Winston Banko, Leon Synder, Kenneth McDonald, Tom Horn, Gene Branson, John Scharff, Chan Robbins, Dick Griffith, Darrel Herbst, John Finley, Dave Olson, Karl Kenyon, Mike Scott, and Dave Marshall.

**Important Note:** Was the first biologist permanently assigned to oversee Service lands and represent the Service in policy decisions in the Pacific and as an unheard of low GS level (GS-11) had to deal with superior graded Generals & Admirals and other Federal Agency Regional representatives in conducting the work of the Service.

**Most Important Issues:** Endangered Species & Pacific Island NWR lands acquisition

**Brief Summary of Interview:** Eugene Kridler was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on December 30, 1919. Eugene first became interested in birds as a child when he noticed a scarlet tanager living in a lilac bush. He worked for CCC for 2 years before enlisting into the military for 6 years. He then went to college under the GI Bill, and would work for the Park Service as a temporary employee at the Lava Beds for 1- year before joining the Fish and Wildlife Service. Eugene met his wife, Edna, while working for the Service and they had two children together. Eugene talks about the various refuges he worked at and mentions various projects he worked on. He also shares a



**Eugene, age 87, & Edna Kridler**  
**January 2006**

**NOTE: Gene passed away in January 2009**



# THE ORAL HISTORY

**Jerry:** This is Jerry Grover a retired Ecological Services & Fishery supervisor in the Portland Regional Office. I'm doing an oral history today with Gene Kridler regarding his career with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The purpose of this interview is part of a program to preserve the heritage and culture of the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service through the eyes of its employees. With me today in Sequim, Washington, is his wife Edna and Judy Grover. Would you state your name for the record.

**Eugene:** I'm Eugene Kridler, no middle initial, born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on December 30, 1919. I was the runt of the litter; I'm the youngest member of the family.

**Jerry:** Gene, what got you into the Fish and Wildlife, did you have an experience as a young man that led you to the field of Fish and Wildlife?

**Eugene:** Well, I was in the CCC for 2 years and I enjoyed it and it was hard work, but I enjoyed it. It was during the depression and we needed every penny we could get. I got \$30 a month, 25 went home for my family and I kept \$5. And later on made an assistant leader and was paid \$36 a month. I kept \$11; I was rich! And I enjoyed the outdoor work. It was also the thing that got me started on birds when I was a kid. A scarlet tanager lived in a lilac bush, it was a red and black bird and I was entranced with it. And then after that when I came home I couldn't find a job.

**Jerry:** Home then is when you were still in Milwaukee?

**Eugene:** Milwaukee! I couldn't find a job because they didn't want to hire young people with no experience. So I enlisted in the Army horse cavalry with my brother. We were part of five other brothers that had been in the horse cavalry at one time or the other.

**Jerry:** When was that?

**Eugene:** 1938. And then 1940 we lost our horses and they converted us to field artillery. They mobilized us in October 1940 and we went down to Louisiana. We were down there for a while and we maneuvered all throughout the south. Then we got the news that we were at war. The Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. I said, "Oh God almighty!" and I was in field artillery as an anti-tank sergeant. Later on in 1943 I was sent overseas to England. I spent some time in England and I landed in Normandy 2 weeks after the initial invasion. It was still pretty hot then. I had my moments of terror interrupted by long periods of boredom and misery. And I'm expert on the soils because of foxholes I'd dug.

**Jerry:** You're what?

**Eugene:** Foxholes I'd dug.

**Jerry:** You were an expert on that?

**Eugene:** Yeah, yeah that's how I got to be an expert on soils.

**Edna:** Because he dug so many foxholes.

**Eugene:** My unit started in northern France and Belgium and the Netherlands and then we wound up in Germany. Then I came home in 1945 and discharged at Fort Sheridan in Illinois. So then I didn't graduate from high school, I had a year or so to go in high, so I went Milwaukee vocational school and got my diploma there. And then I went to University of Wisconsin in

Milwaukee, the Milwaukee campus for a year and a half majoring in Forestry; I wanted to be a forester. But then University of Wisconsin did not have a four-year forestry curriculum.

So I wrote to Minnesota, but at that time the colleges were swamped with GI's under the GI Bill. I never dreamed of going to college when I was a kid because we were poor and only the rich kids went to college and only rich kids would ride streetcars to school. We walked. Anyway, so I wrote to various universities throughout the north, Michigan State and University of Minnesota, New York State, but they wouldn't accept non-resident students. So then I wrote to the University of Montana and Montana would. So I went to University of Montana for a year and a half.

**Jerry:** Okay, what year was it you wrote to the University of Montana, what year was that?

**Eugene:** University of Montana was 1948.

**Jerry:** '48 okay, so you're a 28-year-old guy then.

**Eugene:** Yes! They had a lousy curriculum and it was a very small Forestry school at that time. So I switched majors to wildlife and transferred down to Utah State University. I got a degree in wildlife management down there. And I got my diploma in 1950, 1951.

**Jerry:** In '51, I graduated from there in 1960. From Utah State. So you're another Aggie, huh?

**Eugene:** We had to take a field trip with a bus and we visited all the major national wildlife refuges and national parks in the west. We wound up at Lava Beds National Monument in northern California and the superintendent came down and was talking to Jess Lowe who was the co-op unit leader of the University. And they were looking for, he was looking for a temporary ranger/naturalist. So I said, "I'll take it." So I

worked there for a year and at the time the National Park Service hadn't given an examination for a ranger for 9 years. So I said, "Oh God how long am I going to have to wait?" So then I was talking to Gene Munson, who was assistant manager at Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuge - it was just adjacent to the national monument. He said, "Well I guess they're talking about needing a clerk up at Bowdoin National Wildlife Refuge up in north central Montana." So I wrote to the regional office about it and they said, "Well if you want the job, you've got it." So I went out there and Leon Snyder was refuge manager at the time.

**Jerry:** So the time that you went to Bowdoin, had you graduated from college from then?

**Eugene:** Yes.

**Jerry:** Okay, that was a senior trip that you took?

**Eugene:** Yes. I graduated with 45 more credit hours than necessary for a bachelor's degree because I transferred from one University to another. And you know the thing that got me disgusted with Montana, they were requiring the forestry majors to take such things as the American novel, Shakespeare. I'm interested in forestry, not Shakespeare.

**Jerry:** So what grade did they hire you in at Bowdoin?

**Eugene:** As a GS-3 clerk.

**Jerry:** Okay so it was only upward from there, Gene.

**Eugene:** Yeah. But you know Leon Snyder was very happy to get me and he was a nice boss. So he turned much of the biological work over to me. It was mainly with waterfowl, with antelope and shorebirds and that sort of stuff.

**Jerry:** What, inventories or surveys?

**Eugene:** Oh inventories and also making periodic counts, weekly counts. And which birds are nesting, which birds had young, and the broods they had and what was the production of various species.

**Jerry:** So just baseline data basically?

**Eugene:** And then after a while, after I worked for them for a while and I wanted to get to be a biologist and they said, “Well no!” I said, “Well okay, I’ll write to Michigan State, get a state job as a biologist.” And low and behold they said, “Well we’ve got a position at Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge down in southeastern California. That was in 1952. So I went down there and boy that’s hot country; day after day, week after week, month after month, over a hundred.

**Jerry:** Did you get a promotion going down there?

**Eugene:** Yes, I was assistant manager as a GS-5.

**Jerry:** GS-5, okay that’s the standard college degree entry level.

**Eugene:** Yeah. And after that I was down there for almost two years under Ed O’Neill. Do you know Ed?

**Jerry:** Don’t know Ed.

**Eugene:** Oh well, he was, he was a good man. And he wrote a book, *Under the Blue Goose Sign*, which I got. And anyways he now lives in Merrill, Oregon, by Klamath Basin, Oregon. Then in the regional office he asked me if I wanted to be the refuge manager at McNary Refuge. And I said, “Oh yes I’ll accept it.” And I was the first refuge manager they had at McNary.

**Jerry:** McNary where?

**Eugene:** Near Burbank, Washington, which is just close Pasco. I had three refuges, small refuges under me. And McNary,

which we inherited from the Corps of Engineers because they constructed McNary Dam and did a lot of flooding of back land. And so the Service said, “Okay we want some of that land for a refuge.” So I was sent over there and only had one maintenance man to help me. We worked like dogs developing that area and also had Cole Springs, which was a reservoir in Oregon and McKay Creek Refuge, which is a refuge just outside of Pendleton; all three areas were under McNary.

**Jerry:** Did you get a promotion going up there then?

**Eugene:** I got a GS-7.

**Jerry:** Project leader.

**Eugene:** Um huh.

**Eugene:** Yeah (chuckling). Yes and back then the grades were very hard to get and very low compared to what they have today. And now they got personnel coming out of their ears, which we didn’t have. And so I was chief bottle washer on McNary and one day McDonald came with Leo Lathe for an inspection. And we had an old house that we lived in that the Corps of Engineers had gotten in the process of getting the whole area for the McNary Dam. It didn’t have a sidewalk, they had about two inches of dust and...

**Edna:** Black widow spiders.

**Eugene:** ...and our oldest son, Gene, was born in 1951 in Pasco, Washington. And I had to go to McNary Game Range, which was a state refuge adjacent to McNary Refuge for water because the well that we had over at McNary was polluted; so heavily polluted we couldn’t use it for drinking water.

**Jerry:** Now let’s back up a minute, Gene, somewhere along the line here Edna came into the picture.

**Eugene:** Well I married her. I saw this real good-looking gal walking by me at, what was the name of that dance hall?

**Edna:** Eagle's Ball Room, we both liked ball room dancing and...

**Eugene:** And polkas and tangos.

**Jerry:** Is this in Milwaukee or?

**Eugene:** Yeah, it was in Milwaukee.

**Edna:** That was before he started college. He went to school on the GI Bill.

**Eugene:** No I was going to college at that time, I was going to University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee campus at the time.

But I had a part-time job slinging cement blocks used for construction; each block weighed 60 pounds, we took 180 to a load. So the average truck driver lifted 25 tons of block a day and that, I just said, "Well I rather go to school then work all the time as a truck driver."

**Jerry:** So when did you get married then?

**Eugene:** We got married in 1947.

Anyway getting back to McNary, and so anyway Kenneth McDonald and Leo Lathe came by and... McDonald was regional refuge supervisor

**Eugene:** You know who Leo Lathe was the Regional Director. He came up the ranks of the Gopher chokers, the rat control.

**Jerry:** Yep. P & R C they were called, Predator and Rodent Control back in those days.

**Eugene:** Gopher chokers and rat stranglers.

**Eugene:** Well anyway, we didn't have a sidewalk leading up to the house from the road and it was a real dusty place and McNary was really a dusty place. And so I had some old broken down concrete slabs that I picked up from somewhere and I started laying them down because the regional director was coming with the regional refuge supervisor. And McDonald and Leo Lathe they came up and Leo says, "Every time we go to a refuge, the manager is working on his house." And I told him, "God damn it, if I wanted to be a farmer," which I was mainly growing grain crops for wildlife, "if I wanted to be a damn farmer, I would've gone to college to study agriculture instead of wildlife." And that took him aback, you know, but they got me upset. So then about a couple weeks later they asked if I would consider going to Tule Lake or Klamath NWR's as a refuge biologist. I said, "Yeah!" Because Tule Lake had quite a reputation at the time.

**Jerry:** Still does.

**Eugene:** Yes but now they've got more land than they got birds. It's gone downhill because of the water situation. So I was at Tule Lake when Tom Horn was a refuge manager and Gene Branson was the assistant. I was by myself as a biologist. And we also had Clear Lake, Upper Klamath, Lower Klamath, and Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuges to take care of.

**Jerry:** What was your grade at that time, GS grade; did you get another promotion?

**Eugene:** I was just a GS-7. As a refuge biologist.

Tom Horn wanted a guy over in Stillwater NWR, Nevada and he wanted him as a biologist. So I guess he prevailed upon McDonald to transfer me down to Sacramento Refuge and he'd bring in this guy from Stillwater. So, and let me see what year that was—1950, '55. I went to the Sacramento complex, which had Colusa and Sutter under Vernon Ekdahl who was a hell of a nice guy and a refuge biologist. I was down there for 4 years and then we transferred over to Malheur in 1960.

**Jerry:** Okay, 1960 you were transferred to Malheur from Sacramento? With a promotion?

**Eugene:** Yeah a promotion, a GS-11.

**Jerry:** GS-11. Did you get your GS-9 at Sacramento?

**Eugene:** Yes. And then I got my GS-11 at Malheur under John Scharff, who undoubtedly you've heard of. He was a hell of another nice guy. And I worked there as a biologist, the only biologist. A lot of not only biological work but weed control; we had a carp problem and did public relations, I'd take groups around. The groups always came around on Saturday or Sunday and that's when headquarters were 30 miles from Burns so we had to go there for groceries.

**Eugene:** I enjoyed the work because I did a lot of leading groups around. I was interested in bird banding and I was president of the Western Bird Banders Association for a year. And I did a lot of public relations work, and I wrote a lot of the news releases for the local papers at the same time, so John Scharff pretty much left me free. But I didn't agree thoroughly with what John Scharff did with a number of cattle that would graze on the refuge.

**Jerry:** Yes that was an issue, wasn't it? That issue was around for a long time.

**Eugene:** Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. But he was the manager, I was just a biologist so he called the shots. And then one winter Dick Griffith asked me if I wanted to go down to Midway and help Chan Robbins with his aircraft project along with Ed O'Neill. Well Ed O'Neill, at the time, was refuge manager down at Salton Sea NWR. He got in jangle with his supervisor and came to Sacramento Refuge. Ed was kind of a difficult person to get along with. I got along with him but a lot of his crew did not. So he wound up being the biologist at Tule Lake later on. So anyways Ed and I went out to Midway with Chan Robbins and worked on the goony birds over there. Then he asked me if I wanted to be a refuge manager there. It meant going to Hawaii

permanently. I was the first and only Service biologist stationed on Hawaii at the time, and my district included all of Guam, Yap, Pohnapei.

**Jerry:** The Trust territories of the Pacific.

**Eugene:** That's right. And American Samoa and Johnson Island. And it's just overwhelming. I went into regional office on my way over there, Dick Griffith says, "Oh yeah there's a few other projects we'd have do." They've got a lot of refuges out there now. It takes personnel to run a refuge so I can understand why...

**Jerry:** So what were the other things that Dick Griffith asked you to do?

**Eugene:** Well at one time at Kealia Pond, which is next to the Kahului Airport on Maui there was a movement a foot by the FAA to fill it up. It was the most important, I think, one of the most important endangered water bird areas in the world. So I went over there and did some on work on the kind of birds there, at what height they flew, and when they crossed over there. As result of my research, we shot down the FAA. They couldn't fit the airport extension over there so it helped the State out by doing that work.

**Jerry:** At what, that wetlands was not refuge at the time?

**Eugene:** None of them were. And through the years I was responsible for the acquisition of James Campbell Refuge, and also the Pearl Harbor areas. I got together with the Navy or I worked with the military services to develop wildlife plans for their various bases; Hawaii has a lot military bases.

**Jerry:** Now in you're in Hawaii, what grade were you then when you went to Hawaii.

**Eugene:** I still had a GS-11.

**Jerry:** Okay and you're dealing with admirals and generals and... administrators of FAA...

**Eugene:** That's right.

**Jerry:** ...representing the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Just you in your underwear.

**Eugene:** State Fish and Game, Michio Takata was director at that time so I had office space with them for a year or so. And then I had office space the GSA found me in a different building. I was also the refuge manager for the Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge on Midway Island and that had been a refuge area since 1909. The Fish and Wildlife Service and its predecessor agencies had ignored it all these years, with all the goony birds – Laysan and Black-footed Albatross - and the petrels. They had endangered species over there endemic to the refuge. The Nihoa finch, Laysan finch and the Laysan duck on Laysan Island; very small areas. And not only that but Hawaii has had more of its species become extinct than any other place in the world. So anyways I was a refuge manager there for a number of years and then I just felt burned out and I said, "God d\*mn it," John Finley was the regional director at the time. I said, "I want to get back to the mainland." And he said, "No, no you know more about the Pacific than anybody else in the service." So I said, "Okay, provided that I work strictly with endangered species." So I wound up as endangered species coordinator and then...

**Jerry:** Did you have any staff at that time?

**Eugene:** No.

**Jerry:** Or did you get staff?

**Eugene:** I got staff. I got Ernie Kosaka

**Jerry:** And Ernie's still there.

**Eugene:** He's still there. I had Darrel Herbst as a botanist, but that was a couple years later. And I got together with the State Fish and Game and worked with Ron Walker and Dave Woodside in publishing a number of these books. Have you ever seen those about endangered species?

**Jerry:** Okay these books that you worked on, one is *Hawaii's Endangered Forest Birds*?

**Eugene:** Yep. We started out with endangered wildlife as a whole. And then we went to endangered water birds.

**Jerry:** There's a whole series of these books?

**Eugene:** Yes, there are three books.

**Eugene:** John Finley was very, very good to me and helpful. So he asked me to get a whole bunch of people together and hold a conference about the endangered species of Hawaii. We had a bunch of military people there and had a lot of people from the mainland. Also the conservation agencies. We had about a hundred people for that conference. And that wonderful, you know.

**Jerry:** It was more that just Fish and Wildlife people?

**Eugene:** That's right, it was more than that. So we published the proceedings and at the time I was still administrator for Fish and Wildlife.

**Jerry:** Now what was your grade at that time doing Endangered Species, still GS-11?

**Eugene:** No, when Dave Olson came along from Minnesota; from one of the refuges over there. He and I worked like dogs, you know, we had to do all the work for the Fish and Wildlife Services. The Ecological Services, the River Basin and they all sniped to me, "Well, we've got a guy over on Maui. Yeah let's dump it on him." And so Dave Olson came to work and I think



he was just a GS-9 at the time and he was very unhappy with the high cost of living in Hawaii.

**Jerry:** You didn't get any cost of living adjustment in COLA?

**Eugene:** Yes, we got a 50% cost of living adjustment.

**Jerry:** Okay, but it's still high?

**Eugene:** Still high. So I managed to get Dave his GS-11.

**Jerry:** And you were a GS-12 then?

**Eugene:** I was also promoted to a GS-12. Later on when I was endangered species coordinator, I got a GS-13 out of it and that was as high as it went. Now they've got GS-14's and 15's doing just part of the job I did. Anyways, I still had the refuge under my wing. We'd go out there about two to three times a year for a couple weeks at a time. I was cockroaching transportation from the Coast Guard because we had no other way to get out there. At that time the Coast Guard had a Loran station at Kure Atoll & Tern Island and so they were serviced there by aircraft once every couple of weeks and by ship about twice a year. I would cock roach them. I would take four people with me; one was a biologist from State Fish and Game, another some professor from an University with a certain expertise in something, and Dave Olson and myself. I decided to get fellows that were experts in their fisheries, that were experts on coral, that were experts in wildlife, that were experts in botany so I could pick their brains. And in order for them to go with me they had to give me some information. We built up quite a database. In the process the Hawaiian monk seal was endangered and we tagged over 800 monk seal.

Most of the monk seals went to breed out on the refuge, refuge islands and atolls. We tagged over 300 green sea turtles. Then the Endangered Species Act came into being. And then the seal and the turtles were turned over to National Marine Fishery Service, which I labeled No More Fish Service because they're in the back pocket of the commercial fishery industry.

**Jerry:** I hadn't heard that, NMFS, No More Fish Service.

**Eugene:** (Chuckling)....And now I guess NOAA has got a bunch of people working on that on seals and turtles, but I was the first guy to tag them. And also Karl Kenyon, did you ever know him? Seattle Research

**Jerry:** Karl Kenyon, no.

**Eugene:** Karl Kenyon was a seal man. He originally was up in Alaska and then he came down to Hawaii so I had him go along with me. So as I said, we tagged a hell of a lot of seal. See that picture over there? We're tagging turtles, I'm getting ready to band that nestling goony bird and at the top. I'm measuring the carapace of a turtle. And over there on the right, I'm banding a Hawaiian Forest Bird. I was the first to band a Hawaiian Forest Bird, and next to it I'm tagging a seal.

**Jerry:** So the seals like you tagging them or do you have to wrestle them?

**Eugene:** Oh yeah! We started out with banding adults and tagging adults but we just had a tarp strung in between two long bamboo poles, which we carried on our backs around the islands. We would throw those over a seal to immobilize it and then we tag it and let them loose.

**Jerry:** Okay, you didn't take anything like weight or...?

**Eugene:** No, no, no.

**Eugene:** Just checking where they migrated. What it was, was the beginning research on monk seals; nobody else had done it before. And also Karl said, "It's getting kind of hairy tagging these seals all the time, adults, let's turn our attention on just pups." Because we were working with an old age animal then, and then we wouldn't get returns on it. We know they pupped on Laysan Island and wound up on the main Hawaiian Islands.

We also tagged a hell of a lot various species of birds on that refuge and also tagged a lot of albatross. And then I said, "Well those birds are taking care of themselves, let's devote most of our energies to research on endangered species of birds because the Hawaiian Islands Refuges had the very sad experience in the early 1900's; they dug guano. And a guano digger introduced rabbits to Laysan and within a few short years, they ate every bit of vegetation on the island. As a result the Laysan Miller Bird and Laysan Honeycreeper became extinct. Then after that, for some reason or the other, the guano diggers operation ceased. Later on it was declared a national wildlife reservation by Theodore Roosevelt in 1909. And the Service had ignored it for all these many years until I was sent out there in 1964. They didn't show any interest at all in it until Dave Marshall happened to go out there the year before I did. He went over there, I think, to visit the one or two islands and he came back and he took a lot of pictures. And he said, "We ought to get somebody out there." John Finley agreed, "Okay, we're going along with that." So I was sent out there.

**Jerry:** What was Dave Marshall doing? Was he in the Regional Office in Portland?

**Eugene:** Yes, he was regional refuge supervisor at the time. Before he went into Washington. And I was refuge manager. We lived out there for 6 years so I was refuge manager out there for 9 years before I took on the job as the Endangered Species Coordinator.

**Jerry:** Okay so 9 years for refuges and then how long did you do the endangered species?

**Eugene:** Seven years as Endangered Species Coordinator. By that time Patuxent had sent Win Banko over there, but I had no jurisdiction over Win; he came under the Patuxent Research Lab. Also John Sincock, John Sincock was a hell of a nice guy and he died, he had a heart attack some years ago. Those two were doing strictly research on endangered species on the main Hawaiian Islands. And then I got to other people and we got the

Service interested in the whole damn Endangered Species Program, especially out there.

**Jerry:** This was a change now in the Endangered Species Program or a refocus or?

**Eugene:** Well it wasn't a refocus, the Endangered Species Act came into being in 1973; I'd been out there 9 years before that came in. That's when the Endangered Species was being proposed. Before that there was none. And I got the information about endangered species status, I'll dig it out for you.

**Jerry:** So the Endangered Species Act had been enforced for two years...

**Eugene:** Since 1973. A number of folks were trying to have it amended.

**Jerry:** What were the other areas you were working on, you just continue...?

**Eugene:** I was working on Guam. Went over there but about that time Guam had a conservation man but he was a boozier; he did nothing but get drunk. I won't even mention his name, he did nothing; he went native so to speak. And I got down to Yap and Palau, over to Pohnpei and Siapan and had a duck out there Marianas Mallard and there was just a few of them left. So one year Ernie Kosaka and I went out there and we managed to trap three of them. We turned up two males and one female; we turned the males loose. We bought the female back to Hawaii with us and put them up at a state facility. And shortly thereafter I retired and the Service then shipped it to San Diego. Nothing happened. The endangered Marianas mallard is now extinct.

**Jerry:** When you were dealing with Guam, had the brown tree snake made it's appearance yet?

**Eugene:** Yes it had.

**Jerry:** Cuz it was kind of late...

**Eugene:** ...it was ignored, you know, or so many years and then it increased and that was a mistake because it almost eliminated all the native birds. We got together with Mike Scott who was sent out from Patuxent. Well Mike was stationed on Hawaii and so was Win Banko and John Sincock was on Kauai. So Mike Scott, and John Sincock and I put our heads together. These forest birds of Hawaii, a lot of people say, well this is endangered, this is not endangered; they don't really know, had no figures, nothing to base that on just by guess and by gosh. So we came up with a, with an idea of having forest bird survey. John and Mike Scott were the field leaders and I was overall leader. And they, we developed the system to survey all the forest birds in Hawaii, so that way we could say, "Okay this is endangered for sure, this is not endangered."

**Jerry:** What year was this that you initiated this survey of forest birds?

**Eugene:** 1978.

**Jerry:** 1978, just before you retired. Okay so you're going to systemically begin to inventory and determine the status of these birds.

**Eugene:** That's right!

**Jerry:** That would be the first.

**Eugene:** And then, we started out on Kau area of the big island of Hawaii.

**Eugene:** The K A U, Kau area. I retired and Scott and Sincock kept it up. They had a crew of six biologists. Three people laid the transects and then we had a couple botanist on it. And they

surveyed all the forest of the big island and they then went over to Maui and Molokai and over to Hawaii

**Jerry:** Did you continue to stay in Hawaii after you retired?

**Eugene:** We had a son that was suppose to get married so I said, well I'll stay a year or so until he got married and we helped him get a house. We came back to the mainland and I was going to get myself a motor home and travel all around but I had a stroke.

Oh, while I was still Endangered Species Coordinator out there, I was detailed by the Washington Office to go along with another couple from the Park Service. We met with the officials of ? ? ? and we showed them what we were doing and how to do it, and what was endangered and what were not; they should do it, we got them started on it. And then also I was sent over to with a crew to—the Canary Islands, which lay off the northwest coast of Africa but under the jurisdiction of Sparta, Spain. So I went out there for about a month or so, came back and later on they sent us back again.

**Jerry:** Okay, who sponsored this trip to the Canary Islands?

**Eugene:** Somebody in the central office, Interior. Some Park Service people and Fish and Wildlife people.

**Jerry:** When you retired you stayed there for six months, did you ever meet with Fish and Wildlife Service and continue to advise...?

**Eugene:** Oh yeah constantly correspond with them by e-mail, with Jerry Lienecke especially.

**Jerry:** Okay. Jerry was there when you retired then?

**Eugene:** Yes, but in the process. Before I retired, I was responsible for the Service acquiring ten National Wildlife Refuges in Hawaii. And I figured that was a big crowning point

of my career, getting those areas for wildlife and endangered species.

**Edna:** Tell him about the time you went back for the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Refuge System. They asked you back and they honored you at a dinner

**Eugene:** The 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the refuge system?

**Eugene:** They acknowledged the first person to get it started in Hawaii.

**Jerry:** So during the refuge centennial, you were invited back to Hawaii to help celebrate your milestone effort to acquire 10 refuges in Hawaii? Were they all on the main islands or were some of the outbound ones like Midway included?

**Eugene:** Most of them are on the main Hawaiian Islands, especially on Oahu, the Big Island and also Maui with Kealia Pond, and on Hawaii with Hule'ia and Kilauea Point, and Hanalei.

At the time I found out that we had three islands that were set aside Howland, Baker and Jarvis and the and the Marshall Islands. I said, "Well what jurisdiction are they?" Nobody knew; nobody in the government knew. All they knew was the United States had them. So I said, "Well John," it was Regional Director John Finely at the time. I said, "Well John let's make a push to have them transferred to the Fish and Wildlife Service as refuges." So he and Director Lynn Greenwalt got on the ball and had them transferred to the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Wildlife Refuge System

**Jerry:** Okay. Let's step back a minute, you got married in Milwaukee and you had a baby born in Pasco. How many children did you have?

**Eugene:** Two, the other boy was born in Willows, California when I was down at Sacramento Refuge; so we had two sons.

**Jerry:** So what are they doing now?

**Eugene:** Well one works for the Hawaii Parks Department, the other the road department for the city of Kahana. He's 51 years old now.

**Eugene:** He made the mistake trying to get into the Coast Guard. He went through their boot camp and everything else training, "Hey his eyesight doesn't qualify him." Okay, he could stay in the Coast Guard if he wanted to be part of the black gang working down below deck, not up above. So we was washed out of the Coast Guard. And he was in the Reserve for a number of years before he got pissed off because the commanding people, the staff was in a base of the mainland, not in Hawaii. And so he joined the Air Force Reserves. The last couple years he'd been sent out to the mid-east to a place called Kyrgyzstan, which lies just east of China and north of Pakistan.

**Edna:** One of the -stan countries.

**Eugene:** He came back very bitter about what he saw over there, especially the loss of Americans. Anyways, he's going to retire from the Reserve and also the city and county.

**Jerry:** And your other boy is?

**Eugene:** He enlisted in the Navy. He was 20 years in the Navy and he retired from them, got his pension from the Navy as a Chief Petty Officer. So he's in Norfolk, Virginia right now.

**Edna:** So he's a house husband.

**Eugene:** We have two grandsons by our son Jim in Norfolk and one son in Hawaii, a grandson in Hawaii.

**Jerry:** Okay. On your time with the Fish and Wildlife Service.

**Eugene:** It was 29 years.

**Jerry:** Twenty-nine years with the Service and you've been retired 26?

**Eugene:** No, been retired 29 plus a year of Park Service, plus 6 years of military.

**Jerry:** Plus six years of military.

**Eugene:** A total of 37 years. So I put in 29 years with the Fish and Wildlife Service, year with the Park Service, and 6 years with the military. I was a young snot nose.

I received a Service Award from Secretary of Interior, who was I forget his name now. Also from Lynn Greenwalt who was very appreciative of what I did. I knew him when he was just Law Enforcement in the Regional Office...

**Jerry:** In Portland?

**Eugene:** In Portland, and him and Judy were friends of ours. They're nice people.

**Jerry:** They're friends of ours too.

**Jerry:** You say over 100,000 birds that you banded and 300 species?

**Eugene:** Over 300 species.

**Edna:** He's still at it.

**Jerry:** You picking on the dickey birds in your feeder?

**Eugene:** I was using this nest for awhile but later on I had to give this nest cuz I don't like to stand. And it keeps me from chasing park cars and biting at their tires. Laughing

**Edna:** I can find something for you do.

**Eugene:** Also I got the award from the Western Section of the Wildlife Society in 1952 and number of quality of performance awards and special achievements award.

**Jerry:** Was there anybody in your career, you know 29 years is quite a spell, that just stands out to you as just being totally exemplary, either as a support for you or in what you saw them doing?

**Eugene:** ...for one thing, think Lynn Greenwalt was the last scientific director this Service has had. I don't know about the last time or two.

**Jerry:** Well we have H. Dale Hall now, he's a career; he's got a master's degree from Louisiana State.

**Eugene:** And, oh I don't know, I've had good friends, Dave Marshall of course, John Sincock, and Dave Olson a nice guy to work for.

**Jerry:** Did any of these have a particular influence on your career, either as encouraging or mentor?

**Eugene:** Oh I don't think so, I don't think so. I think it falls back to being interested, a person being interested in wildlife and doing as much as I could for wildlife. And fortunately for me is so many people are hunting now days, figure they would have spent how much, 29 billion dollars a year, according to the 1950 National Hunting and Fishing survey

**Jerry:** What is that?

**Eugene:** The National Survey of Hunting and Fishing.

**Jerry:** Oh the 2001 National Survey of Hunting and Fishing; this is one that's been going on for years.

**Eugene:** Yeah, every 5 years. Under the Federal Aid Program, you bet. I've written a number of news releases to local papers,

the Seattle Paper, about the economic value of wildlife. But too many people are just looking at dickey birds, not the habitat instead of being out there, if nothing else appearing at public meetings that they're going to have some design on some land.

**Jerry:** So you think they out to be more involved or at least more hands on?

**Eugene:** That's right, more hands one because more and more of the birds, especially in wildlife, are losing their habitat to development of all these subdivisions.

**Jerry:** Yeah I see the buyer on the hill there that they're...

**Eugene:** Yeah, that's one of them.

**Jerry:** You know there's an old German saying that, "Why are there more horses asses than there are horses".

**Eugene:** I frequently quote that.

**Jerry:** Did you come across any of these that weren't attached to a horse in your career?

**Eugene:** Yeah (chuckling).

**Edna:** No, generally speaking they were all pretty nice people, weren't they Gene?

**Eugene:** Yeah.

**Edna:** There may have been a few that we weren't that crazy about but overall they were pretty good.

**Eugene:** A few donkeys though, but by in large while I won't say that, Bush really cripes me. And Cheney and Karl Rove and the rest of those people.

**Jerry:** Okay you talked about the high point of your career and Service good family. Is there something that you'd wish you had done, that you'd missed the opportunity that when you were some place and you look back at it now, "I had a chance to do something." Is there something that you should have done or helped the Fish and Wildlife Service to take on?

**Eugene:** I can't think of anything. I turned down a couple transfers to the central office, and also turned down a couple transfers to regional office because I wanted to be out in the field. I was the first designated Endangered Species Coordinator. I came under the jurisdiction of the Central Office Endangered Species Program. Keith Shriner was the head of that Program. He wanted me to come back there but, and I guess I think it was Keith that said, I had to back there with Dave Marshall. One time he said, "You know Gene, I had 65 telephone calls from the staff of politicians today." I said, "God all mighty, I don't want that." And also when I went back, around Washington D.C. , I saw 12, 13, 14 year old kids boozing it up in bars. I don't want to expose my children to that.

**Jerry:** During your career, you have some stories to tell...?

**Eugene:** Well.

**Jerry:** You know everybody's got one, you know law enforcement guys you get around at meetings and they've always got...

**Eugene:** Well I don't know. I guess when I was down at Salton Sea Refuge I was helping a state guy band ducks and Ed O'Neill came up with a professor from ornithology, I think, from San Diego or somewhere like that. And we waited, we were out there in a duck trap and we waited into the night and Ed said, "I want you to meet my assistant Gene Kridler." This is Dave Anderson and we shook hands. And he said, "This Bill Anderson, he's worked for Fish and Game." And Bill stuck out his hand out and this guy said, "Just keep it!" And it surprised

Ed and I, you know, to get that sort of response, and he's taking his hate out from the state out on an employee. And Bill wouldn't have harmed a bird if his life depended on it.

And also there was the time we went swimming off Ni'ihau island in Hawaii. Had quite an experience over there, that's written up in this book.

**Jerry:** That the one that's marked? *Perils of Paradise*, so what was this experience?

**Eugene:** Well I was washed off Ni'ihau Island by a huge wave.

**Jerry:** That doesn't sound like fun or humorous.

**Eugene:** I was worried about sharks too, because it's very sharky out there in the waters. In fact when we were working on the refuge island all day long there wasn't a bit of shade, and so at the end of the day we would wade into the surf with a can of beer and duck underneath the surf and looked around, no fish with long teeth and then we would drink our beer.

And another time I fell out of a tree on Tinian Island, just north of Guam, Saipan, looking for Marianas Mallard. And I had a few other experiences that I did not tell about because every time I went on a trip, she worried about me.

**Jerry:** Okay this is the island just north of Guam?

**Eugene:** Yes, Tinian.

**Eugene:** I fell out of a tree over there. I fell about twenty-five feet out of the tree, the limb broke underneath me, I came down and landed in a cloud of dust and I was taken to the hospital over in Saipan. And there was an old Saipanese women, suppose to mop the floor of the ward, she dipped that mop in the bucket once and she mopped the entire ward with that mop with just bucket dip in water. I remember that and there was a kid right next me, he had a broken arm and they reset it wrong, so

he had to have his arm re-broken again. I felt so sorry for him, you know.

**Jerry:** So did you break anything?

**Eugene:** No nothing but my butt.

**Edna:** Did you tell him about that snake, sitting down with that snake at Salton Sea?

**Eugene:** Oh down at Salton Sea Refuge, I sat right down next to a sidewinder. There was a hole in the dyke and I was trying to plug that hole with dirt and it was hot, you know 115 in the shade. I sat down to catch my breath and there was a sidewinder along side me, I never noticed him. And he was too damn hot to even strike, so I got the world's record for high jump from a sitting position when I found out about that snake, sitting right along beside of it. Oh what else, well there are too many I guess to remember.

**Jerry:** You've been retired a good long piece now, what do you think the future is in the Fish and Wildlife Service? Would you recommend a young person today going for a career with the Fish and Wildlife Service?

**Eugene:** Yes but I think he would become disappointed with this present administration, especially with this James Watts and his skirts, Gale Norton. And I think she's been bad for the Fish and Wildlife Service as well as the Park Service.

**Jerry:** But you still think the Fish and Wildlife Service can be saved or still be a rewarding career?

**Eugene:** Yeah I think so, I had an enjoyable career.

**Jerry:** If you stay with the biology and not politics.

**Eugene:** Yes, but you know in a way you have to be into politics too in order to get the money you want for your particular project.

**Jerry:** Edna, I'm going to turn to you now, you have been married since a lot of years.

**Edna:** It will be 59 years in May.

**Jerry:** And what do you think about this Fish and Wildlife Service, having to travel and follow this dude around?

**Edna:** I liked it; I enjoyed it. I was raised on a farm in Wisconsin, so I was familiar with the outdoors.

**Jerry:** Okay, you weren't a city girl so you weren't disappointed when you had to haul your own water or cook on wood stove...

**Edna:** That's right.

**Jerry:** ...or use an outhouse.

**Edna:** No, didn't bother me that much I had already been through it once.

**Jerry:** And what you would recommend to a wife or a spouse of a Fish and Wildlife?

**Edna:** You have to have some interest of our own, because you're going to be spending a lot of time alone.

**Jerry:** What was your interest when he was out having fun?

**Edna:** I belonged to several women's clubs and I took courses in different subjects I was interested in and especially nutrition.

**Jerry:** Did you have a career of our own; did you work?

**Edna:** Yes. I worked for the telephone company and I worked for the company that makes lawn motors, Briggs and Stratton. And then when I married him. I stayed home with the kids; he was gone so much I felt the children should have at least one parent at home. So I did not go back to work again.

**Eugene:** She said one of the smartest things she ever did, besides marry me of course. She got a telephone operator job in an air conditioned building in Brawley, the Salton Sea area.

**Jerry:** Okay if you're down in a Salton Sea in an air-conditioned office.

**Eugene:** And we didn't have any air conditioning in the office over there, was a used glider crate Ed O'Neill had made into an office. And he had a tough wife too working down there.

**Jerry:** When you were with refugees like that, were you living in government quarters or did you live in town?

**Eugene:** We lived in town somewhat. I did down at Salton Sea and Bowdoin, we had a basement apartment in Bowdoin. Every now and then a train would wizz by and we had to jump off the tracks.

**Edna:** Well we had some interesting experiences.

**Eugene:** We lived on government housing at Sacramento Refuge and also at Tule Lake and at Malheur.

**Jerry:** Was it adequate?

**Eugene:** Yeah it was just adequate, yeah just adequate.

**Edna:** Sometimes barely adequate.

**Eugene:** Also at McNary, which was very inadequate, very inadequate.



**Edna:** But that was an old farmhouse with black widow spiders crawling all over the place.

**Jerry:** Was Hawaii was all private housing, you didn't stay, any of the military housing? You lived right in Honolulu?

**Eugene:** We had to buy our one home there too.

**Edna:** No we didn't live in Honolulu, we lived in a bedroom community.

**Eugene:** In Kailua on the other side of the island.

**Edna:** Through the tunnel and on the windbreak side. Nice winds come over, over the water quite often.

**Eugene:** When we went down to Salton Sea at first they had a trailer for us, and boy was that unlivable in awful poor shape. And in fact to use the shower, we had to use the same shower the crew used; and it was the only facility we had down there. And I remember there was about that much space between the floor and the bottom of the wall and the dust would come through, and the dirt would come through.

**Edna:** So we moved to town because I wanted to work and we just had the one car so I could walk to work.

**Eugene:** Oh I had a lot of experiences that I don't remember right off hand.

**Edna:** All and all we had a good time with the Fish and Wildlife though, we had a good life.

**Eugene:** I enjoyed working at Malheur and Hawaii, of course, and Salton Sea because I had good supervisors there.

When we went back to Norfolk, I had my son take us down to Back...

**Judy:** Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge, we've been there too.

**Eugene:** And we wanted to talk to the refuge manager in charge, not available. None of the permanent people were available, just volunteers.

**Jerry:** They depend on a lot of volunteers but mostly Back Bay has an ORP down there, that's what they call a Outdoor Recreation Planner, which is suppose to be kind of the main contact for the Service; they write the news releases and do the school groups that come in or the other kinds of things, conduct the education programs, they go to the schools as well as take tours. They depend an awful lot on volunteers, they just don't have the money or the positions.

This will concludes our interview and I want to thank you very much for inviting us into your home to complete this important oral history interview. Thank You